

The Shulammitte,
The Shepherd,
and Solomon, the King.

INTRODUCTION

We don't read very far in the Song of Songs before we realize two things: one, it contains exquisite love lyrics, and two, it is very explicit sexually. The Song, in other words, makes a connection between conjugal love and sex—a very important very biblical connection to make. There are some who would eliminate sex when they speak of love, supposing that they are making it more holy. Others, when they think of sex, never think of love. The Song proclaims an integrated wholeness that is the center of Christian teaching on committed, wedded love for a world that seems to specialize in loveless sex.

The Song is a convincing witness that men and women were created physically, emotionally, and spiritually to live in love. At the outset of Scripture we read, "It is not good for man to live alone." The Song of Songs elaborates on the Genesis story by celebrating the union of two diverse personalities in love.

We read Genesis and learn that this is the created pattern of joy and mutuality. We read the Song and see the goal and ideal toward which we all press for fulfillment. Despite our sordid failures in love, we see here what we are created for, what God intends for us in the ecstasy and fulfillment that is celebrated in the lyricism of the Song.

Christians read the Song on many levels: as the intimacy of marital love between man and woman, God's deep love for his people, Christ's Bridegroom love for his church, the Christian's love for his or her Lord. It is a prism in which all the love of God in all the world, and all the responses of those who love and whom God loves, gathers and then separates into individual colors.

— *"Introduction to Song of Songs" by Eugene Peterson*

THE SHEPHERD HYPOTHESIS

One common way to interpret the Song of Solomon is as a narrative. Especially popular in the 18th and 19th century, the “shepherd hypothesis presupposes three main characters: King Solomon, a country shepherd lad and a young maiden identified as the Shulammitte. The girl and the shepherd boy are very much in love, but Solomon by various means tries to woo her affections. He ultimately fails. Thus we have a love triangle, rather than a simple romance between two young lovers. Since the girl constantly repels the advances of Solomon, so that he finally gives up any claim over her, the message of the Song is seen as the triumph of faithful loyalty of true love over against the seduction of wealth and flattery. Power and privilege cannot erode the true romance of simple country lovers.”

— *“The Message of the Song of Songs”* by Tom Gledhill

IN THE HAREM OF SOLOMON
MID AFTERNOON

THE SHULAMMITE

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for your love is better than wine.

Your touch intoxicates. Your strokes enflame.

The pleasant aroma of your fragrance rises in the air.

Your name is perfume poured out; therefore all the women love you.

Draw me after you; let us escape together into a cloud-filled chamber.

THE HAREM

We will rejoice with you.

We will extol your love more than wine, for rightly does he love you.

THE SHULAMMITE

I am black, but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Dark like the depths of distant nomad tents, like tapestry in the court of our King.

Do not stare because the sun cast her fiery gaze upon me.

My brothers were angry and they made me keeper of their vineyards; alas, that luscious vine uniquely mine, I have not kept!

Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where will you make pasture?

Where will you lie down at noon?

Why should I be absent your care?

HAREM

Listen, radiant one—if you lose sight of him, follow his footsteps and see where he leads.

Come with your burdens and cares to the sanctuary of the shepherds.

SOLOMON ENTERS

SOLOMON

You, my love, excite me as a mare excites the stallions of Pharaoh, entrancing in allure with the secret pulse of naked power.

The strings of jewels against your cheeks frame your elegance, as also the tender curve of your neck with precious gems.

I will adorn you with gold and silver jewelry to mark and accent your beauty.

SOLOMON SITS, DISTRACTED BY THE HAREM

THE SHULAMMITE

The king lies on his couch, enchanted by the scent of perfume yet my beloved is to me like a sachet of myrrh which lies all night between my breasts.

He is a cluster of camphire—henna plucked near the vines at the fountain of the Lamb.

SOLOMON

Behold, you are so fair, my love; behold, you are so fair.
You have doves' eyes.

*THE GIRL LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW,
IMAGINING HER LOVE*

THE SHULAMMITE

You are so handsome, my love, pleasing beyond words!

On nature's verdant litter there we will lie.

We will rest on greeny sward, in Eden's secret glade enwrapped
in nature's close embrace.

A bower of never-ending emerald!

A canopy of firs!

With you, I am the spring rose.

I am the lily of the valley.

SOLOMON

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among women.

THE SHULAMMITE

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved
among men.

I knelt under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

SOLOMON IS INTRIGUED

THE SHULAMMITE

He brought me to the banqueting table, his standard-pole raised.

His banner over me is love.

Spread me out and bed me down in rugs of raisin and apple beds for I am sick with love.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand strokes and teases me

*SOLOMON STANDS, APPROACHES THE GIRL
THE HAREM URGES HIM ON*

THE SHULAMMITE (to the Harem)

Promise me, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the strength and powers of the field that you will not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

THE GIRL TURNS HER BACK TO SOLOMON

FIN.

IN THE HAREM OF SOLOMON
AFTER MIDNIGHT

THERE IS A NOISE AT THE WINDOW

THE GIRL GETS UP FROM HER BED TO INVESTIGATE

THE SHULAMMITE

The voice of my beloved!

Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.

Let me describe him: he is graceful as a gazelle, swift as a wild stag.

Now he comes closer, even to the place where I reside.

He is gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice.

THE SHEPHERD (offstage)

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away for the winter has past.

The rains have soaked the earth and left it bright with blossoming flowers.

The season for singing and pruning the vines has arrived.

I hear the cooing of doves to wake you and guide you forth.

The fig tree ripens and the vines blossom; they give forth a heady fragrance.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

THE BOY CLIMBS THE TRELIS

THE GIRL OPENS THE WINDOW

THE BOY LEANS IN FOR A KISS

THE SHEPHERD

Now, my dove, don't be shy.

Don't hide from me in the clefts of the rock or nest like a bird in
the secret places of the stairs.

Let me see your face.

Let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice and your face is
fair.

A KISS

THE SHEPHERD

Catch all the foxes for us, those little foxes that menace our
vineyard.

For we are never more vulnerable than when we are in bloom!

THE BOY DESCENDS

THE SHULAMMITE

My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among my lilies.

THE GIRL RETURNS TO BED

THE SHULAMMITE

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn to me, my
beloved, and be a young hart upon the mountains.

THE GIRL TOSSES AND TURNS

THE SHULAMMITE

Restless in bed and sleepless through the night, I long for my lover.

I want him desperately.

So I will get up and search the city, every street and square.
I will pursue the one I love.

*THE GIRL THROWS ON A CLOAK
SHE SNEAKS OUT OF THE HAREM*

EXT. CITY

THE SHULAMMITE

I searched everywhere but did not find him.

ENTER NIGHT WATCHMEN

THE SHULAMMITE

Have you seen the one I love?

THE WATCHMEN SHAKE THEIR HEADS

EXIT WATCHMEN

ENTER BOY

THEY EMBRACE

THE BOY AND THE GIRL RUN AWAY

INT. COTTAGE

THE GIRL CLOSSES THE DOOR TO THE AUDIENCE

THE SHULAMMITE

Promise me, by the strength and powers of the field, that you will not disturb our love till we have drunk our fill.

FIN.

EXT. COTTAGE

SOLOMON'S CARRIAGE APPROACHES

THE SHULAMMITE

Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?

THE SHEPHERD

Behold, it is Solomon's palanquin.

Sixty soldiers guard it, men of might from Israel.

They are all skilled swordsmen, experienced warriors.

Each wears a sword on his thigh, ready to defend the King against an attack in the night.

The King fashioned this throne out of the finest wood that will not decay.

He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple cloth, the interior lovingly and intricately wrought by the daughters of Jerusalem.

THE SHULAMMITE

Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, He is wearing the laurels with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

SOLOMON DESCENDS FROM HIS CARRIAGE

SOLOMON

How lovely you are, my darling, your beauty has achieved perfection.

Behind your veil, your eyes are like those of a dove.

You are grace on display.

Your lips are scarlet ribbon; your mouth invites me.

Your cheeks flush through your veil.

The smooth, lithe lines of your neck command admiration.

Your breasts are like two fawns, twin gazelles grazing in a meadow of lilies.

Until the day break, and the shadows flee, I will come to your mound of myrrh, and to your hills of incense.

You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

THE GIRL PULLS AWAY

THE SHEPHERD

Now you are ready, my bride, to come with me as we ascend the highest peaks together.

We will look down from the crest of glistening mountains from the summit of our sublime sanctuary, away from this lion's den and leopard's lair.

SOLOMON

You have ravished my heart, my love, my treasure; you have ravished my heart with a single glance.

THE SHEPHERD

Your love delights me, my treasure, my bride.

Your love is better than wine, your perfume more exotic than spice.

Your lips drip nectar, my bride; milk and honey flow under your tongue; the fragrance of your dress is the bouquet of the moon.

EXIT GIRL AND BOY TOGETHER

EXT. GARDEN

THE SHEPHERD

A garden enclosed is my treasure, my love; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Your thighs shelter a paradise of pomegranates mixed with rare spice—henna with camphire, honeysuckle and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloe, and every aromatic spice.

You are a fountain in a garden, a well of living water and a flowing stream

THE SHULAMMITE

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind!

Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow.

Let my beloved come to his garden, and enjoy my finest fruits.

THE SHEPHERD

I have come into my garden, my treasure, my love.

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey.

I have drunk my nectar with my wine.

THE SHULAMMITE

Celebrate with us, friends; drink abundantly, O beloved.

Be intoxicated with love.

FIN.

INT. COTTAGE

THE GIRL IS ALONE IN BED

THE SHULAMMITE

I fell asleep, but my heart was awake when I heard my lover knocking and calling.

THE BOY KNOCKS AT THE LOCKED DOOR

THE SHEPHERD

Open to me, my treasure, my love, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my hair with the wetness of the night.

THE SHULAMMITE

I have taken off my robe.

Should I get dressed again?

I have washed an am in bed.

Should I get dirty again?

SHE SITS UP IN BED

THE SHULAMMITE

My lover thrusts his hand through my keyhole.
I throb.

*THE GIRL STANDS AND MAKES HER WAY TO THE
DOOR*

THE SHULAMMITE

I arise to open the door for my love.

My hands drip with myrrh.

My fingers wet with perfume as I draw the bolt.

*SHE OPENS THE DOOR
THE BOY IS GONE*

THE SHULAMMITE

My heart sinks.

THE GIRL THROWS ON HER CLOAK AND LEAVES

EXT. CITY

THE SHULAMMITE

I searched for him but could not find him anywhere.

I called to him, but there was no reply.

ENTER NIGHT WATCHMEN

*THEY ATTACK THE GIRL
THEY CAPTURE HER AND TAKE HER TO THE PALACE*

FIN.

INT. HAREM

THE SHULAMMITE

The night watchmen found me wandering the city.

They struck me, they wounded me.

The guardsmen of the walls took my clothes.

They were supposed to be our protectors.

THE HAREM COMFORTS

THE SHULAMMITE

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him I am faint with longing.

HAREM

How could you continue to care so deeply for him?

Isn't there another who could steal away your heart?

We see now your beauty, more beautiful than all the others.

What makes your beloved better than any other?

What is it about him that makes you ask us to promise you this?

THE SHULAMMITE

He alone is my beloved.

He shines in dazzling splendor yet is still approachable—
without equal as he stands above all others, outstanding among
ten thousand!

The way he leads me is divine, so pure and dignified as he wears his crown of gold.

Upon this crown are letters of black written on a background of glory.

His eyes sparkle like doves beside springs of water; mounted like jewels and bathed in pools of milk.

His beard smells of sage.

His lips are lilies distilling sweet-scented myrrh.

His arms are rounded bars of gold, set with beryl.

His body is lapis lazuli.

His member, a tusk of ivory.

His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold.

His posture is stately, like the noble cedars of the wood.

His mouth is most sweet: yes, he is altogether lovely.

This is my beloved, and this is my love, O daughters of Jerusalem.

HAREM

O rarest of beauty, where then has your lover gone?

We long to see him too.

Can we help you look for him?

THE SHULAMMITE

My lover has gone down to his spice beds, to feast in his gardens and pluck lilies.

I am my beloved's and he is mine; he grazes among my garden.

ENTER SOLOMON

SOLOMON

O my beloved, you are lovely.

When I see you in your beauty, I see a radiant city where we will dwell as one.

More pleasing than any pleasure, more delightful than any delight, you have ravished my heart, stealing away my strength to resist you.

Even hosts of angels stand in awe of you.

Turn your flashing eyes away from me, for you leave me defenseless.

Your undying devotion to me is the most yielding sacrifice.

Your smile is generous and full—expressive and strong and clean.

Your veiled cheeks are soft and radiant.

Even among sixty queens and eighty concubines and countless young women, I would still choose my dove, my perfect one—the favorite of her family, dearly loved by the one who bore her.

The young women see you and praise you; even queens and royal women sing your praises.

Who is this, they ask, arising like the dawn, fair as the moon,
bright as the sun, majestic as a victorious army?

THE SHULAMMITE

I yearn for the walnut groves, for the almond blossoms in the
breeze.

I yearn to see new spring, and to see whether the vine flourished
and the pomegranates were in bloom.

If I close my eyes, I see myself next to my beloved.

HAREM

Dance, dance, Angel-Princess!

Dance, and we'll feast on your grace!

Everyone wants to see you dance your dance of love and peace.

SHE BEGINS TO SWAY

THE HAREM REMOVE HER ROBES

SOLOMON

How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O queenly maiden.

You are adorned in nothing else.

The curves of your hips are like jewels, cut in the hands of a
cunning craftsman.

Your navel is perfectly formed like a goblet filled with mixed
wine.

Between your thighs lies a mound of wheat, encircled in lotus blossoms.

Your breasts are like two fawns, twin of a gazelle.

Your neck is carved ivory, curved and slender.

Your eyes are sparkling pools.

Your profile arrests my attention.

The stirrings I feel when I see high mountain ranges—the longings, the yearning—remind me of you and I'm spoiled for anyone else!

How fair and how pleasant are you, my love.

You are my delight!

You are tall and supple, like the palm.

I will go up to the palm and I will take hold of the boughs.

Your full breasts are like sweet clusters of dates and the fragrance of your breath like apples.

THE GIRL STOPS DANCING

SOLOMON ADVANCES

SOLOMON

The taste of your mouth is the best wine.

I will go down sweetly, gliding gently over your lips.

I will causing that which is asleep to speak.

SHE REJECTS SOLOMON'S ADVANCES

THE SHULAMMITE

I am my beloved's, and only his desire will be satisfied in me.

THE GIRL FLEES

FIN.

EXT. GARDENS

THE SHULAMMITE

Come, my love, let us go to the fields and spend the night among the wildflowers.

*THE BOY ENTERS
HE TAKES HER HAND*

THE SHULAMMITE

Let us go early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine has budded.

Let's look for wildflowers in bloom, blackberry bushes blossoming white, fruit trees adorned with cascading flowers.

And there I'll give myself to you, my love to your love!

The mandrakes emit their fragrance, fertility surrounds and suffuses us, at our doors are the rarest of fruits, fresh as well as ripened, which I have kept in store for you, my beloved.

If only I could show everyone this passionate desire I have for you.

If only I could express it fully, no matter who was watching, without shame or embarrassment.

I would bring you to my childhood home, and there you would teach me.

I would make you drink wine spiced with the juice of my pomegranate.

Your left hand would be under my head, and your right hand
would stroke and tease me.

*THEY LIE DOWN IN THE FIELD
SHE ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE*

THE SHULAMMITE

Promise me, by the strength and powers of the field, that you will not disturb our love till we have drunk our fill.

THE SHEPHERD

Who is coming from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

THE SHULAMMITE

I aroused you under the apricot tree.

As you were feasting on me, I awakened your innermost being with the travail of my need.

THE SHEPHERD

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a brand upon your arm, for love is strong as death and its jealousy endures beyond the grave.

Love flashes holy fire and the brightest tongue of flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, nor rivers make it to drown.

THE SHULAMMITE

If a man tried to buy love with all his wealth, it would not be enough.

Love can only be free.

FIN.

INT. COTTAGE

THE GIRL
THE BOY
HER BROTHERS

BROTHERS

We have a little sister and her breasts are not yet formed.

What will we do?

If she is a wall, we will protect her with a silver tower.

But if she is a swinging door, we will block her with a cedar bar.

THE SHULAMMITE

I was a maiden, like a wall; now my breasts are like towers.

When my lover looks at me, he knows he will soon be satiated.

King Solomon may have vast vineyards in lush, fertile country where he hires others to work the ground.

But that is a fate that cannot be mine.

My vineyard is not for sale.

I cannot be hired.

I cannot be sold.

But to him whom I love I freely bestow my favors and my fruits.

They are his for the tasting.

My beloved's alone.

THE SHEPHERD

O lady of the garden, our companions long to hear your voice—
as do I!

THE SHULAMMITE

Make haste, my beloved, come and play the graceful gazelle.
Leap like a young stag upon me.

We will dance in the high place of the sky, yes, on mounds of
fragrant spice.

Forever we shall be united as one!

FIN.

